

January 27th, 2016

RE: Proposed Bill to Amend 1970 Public Act 169 Local Historic Districts Act,
House Bill 5232 & Senate Bill 720

Dear Representatives and Senators,

These comments are regarding House Bill 5232 and Senate Bill 720 and the proposed changes to 1970 Public Act 169 Local Historic Districts Act.

Significant resources in Michigan rely on protection from inappropriate alterations, incompatible new construction, and development pressures that often result in demolition. Such protection comes in the form of Michigan's current state law, PA 169 of 1970, enabling local governments to choose to safeguard their historic resources within local historic districts across the state. This local legislation declares historic preservation to be a public purpose and as so, it has value to the entire community.

The proposed changes in HB 5232 and SB 720 undermine the ability of a community to pursue protection of important local landmarks by requiring that 2/3 of property owners within a proposed district boundary first consent to establishing a local historic district. Furthermore, requiring that exact boundaries for a potential local historic district be proposed before appointing a study committee is contradictory to the work the committee is charged with doing—completing research about the significance of historic resources and the area including the boundaries, which are often determined by contiguous architectural periods and styles, plat maps, and other relevant information uncovered during the research process.

In order to establish a local historic district, as proposed by HB 5232 and SB 720, petitioning of property owners and then mandating that the general electorate vote in favor of the district would be required. Unjustly, the reverse process—dissolving a local historic district—would not require such petitioning or voting, allowing local legislative bodies to eliminate a district without nationally accepted guidelines or justification, and without community input. Additionally, these bills seek to eliminate local historic districts in Michigan through their requirement that local historic districts be voted on every 10 years. Not only is such a process exceptionally inefficient, it would be costly to a local government in its dedication of staff time and community education efforts. This modification to PA 169 is transparent in its purpose—to eliminate local historic districts in Michigan, systematically and over time.

House Bill 5232 and Senate Bill 270 should be resoundingly rejected.

Thank you,



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